ANTIQUITY

ruled his country in the humanest and wisest of benevolent autocracies, since the treaty of 1892 placed him on the throne of his murdered father and parricide brother—to our humbler neighbours in Aliabad, the village four miles below the capital which we made our headquarters for fifteen months. As soon as the people grasped the purpose of our coming (which was not easy to explain to an illiterate people) they were overjoyed that a ' Sahib ' should trouble to learn their vernacular—a thing which no white man or woman had done before—and take an interest in their customs and hereditary lore. At first they would hesitate : ' but you have wheels (=machines) in England, and can do all these things better than we can '. Within a few days they were vying with each other in explaining, demonstrating and bringing ploughs, looms, winnowing forks, bows, stone cooking pots to the resthouse where we were installed, that D.L. might measure them and take ' studio portraits ' of them, ' for you mustn't put anything in the book about us that isn't exactly true '.

The entire life of the Hunzukuts is centred in water. The rainfall in the oasis level (7–9,000 feet), is negligible—we reckoned less than 2 inches per annum ; in default of any means of raising the water, the river, flowing between its crumbly earthen cliffs, 500 or 1,000 feet below their fields is useless for irrigation ; there are no springs or wells ; hence all water for all purposes must be trapped high up at the anout of some side glacier and conveyed on galleried aqueducts across yawning gorges and the faces of sheer cliffs. The main water channel, the Dala, which supplies all the more recent villages of Hunza, ' the new settlements ' as they are called in contradistinction to the three original villages—Baltit the capital, Altit and Ganesh—travels some 8 or 10 miles in its circuitous route from the Herber glacier in the gorge behind Baltit, cradled between snow-peaks of 23,000 feet, before it peters out in a semicircular sweep round Aliabad.

The Dala was dug some three or four generations ago (90–100 years) with wooden shovels and wooden picks tipped with ibex horn, and represents an amazing feat of engineering skill for people without any instruments of precision. The sluices that control the distribution of water—every teaspoonful of which is rigorously allotted—are of the simplest ; most often a slab of flattish stone plastered in with mud, sometimes a wooden shutter sliding in a rude wooden frame, sometimes when the water is being taken off to a lower level a circular hole in a stone slab, closed at need with a mushroom-shaped stopper, rough hewn from a solid tree trunk.

2: Lorimer T-3 (1920-4; 1934-5) 1939 AV7 Burusho AV7

spiritual head of the Ismailis. A few of the peasant farmers have learned to read—as some have learned to carpenter—and they have copied out such essential passages of their sacred Persian books as enable them to preside with due solemnity at a name-giving, a burial, or a betrothal. The Mir appoints a sufficient number of these modestly literate men to be khalifas, and lend a dignity to such ceremonies. When you need their services you send for one—as we send for the plumber when our pipes have burst. He performs his duty, shares with honour in the ensuing family feasting, accepts some small gift in kind according to the family's resources, and goes his way to resume his normal work in his own fields.

We knew Afiato of No. 6, for three months or more, as an obliging neighbour and father of a large batch of our child friends; we admired his skill in ploughing and threshing, and the hard work he had put into levelling an intractable patch of hill within a stone's throw of our house and converting it into a vegetable garden before we realized that he was a khalifa or lay-priest. There was nothing in dress or manner to distinguish him from his fellows; he offered no unsought advice and censored no one's morals but his own. If Hunza is, as I believe, the tidiest corner of God's earth, it is also the least priest-ridden, and the absence of fanaticism and superstition is as remarkable and refreshing as the absence of litter. There is an atmosphere of mental independence that makes the air of Hunza spiritually bracing.

What the pre-Islamic cults of Hunza were—and traces of them are slight though DL may have some conjectures to offer about them later—the Hunzukuts of to-day are extraordinarily enlightened.[1] Their folk-lore (very probably borrowed) may tell of apparitions and miracles, but they look for no marvels in their life of everyday, they see no ghosts and fear no Evil Eye. They indulge in no gymnastic prayers, they keep no Fast of Ramazan, they travel on no Hajj. I saw only one man turn Mecca-wards to pray, and that was our Kashmiri

[1] In astounding contrast to their magic- and witch-ridden Shin neighbours in Gilgit (V. *J.R.A.S.*, July, 1919, *The Supernatural in the Folklore of the Gilgit Region*).

2: Lorimer T-3 (1920-4; 1934-5) 1939 AV7 Burusho AV7

514 538 the twenty, whose great-grandchildren were present in the room, a fine old greybeard, active and handsome still despite his years, set out to tell us his memories of the siege of Chitral and Kelly's famous march to its relief, in which he himself had taken part. That was only four or five years after "the downfall of Hunza," as he phrased it, but numbers of Hunza men enlisted in the British relieving force. (Another neighbour of ours in No. 6 was also one of Kelly's volunteers.) He showed me the sword he had carried and the handsome muzzle-loader with its forked rest, both carefully greased and kept in good condition as befits heirlooms of the kind. He discoursed with a tinge of unconcealed regret on the olden days when men were men and fighting was toward, "though of course peace is best," he added with incomplete conviction in his voice. The others broke in with questions, and led him on to talk of this episode and that, rehearsed no doubt many a time before, and to cap the tale he proudly put his finger through his jaw and out under his ear tracing the path of a Chitrali bullet. This honourable wound he wore more proudly than his medal, though this also was displayed with pride.

While he talked away with ease and modesty even the little children listened with intelligent attention, and you could easily picture them in years to come telling their great-grandchildren: "My great-grandfather used to say . . ." Their tastes uncorrupted by the sensational gossip of the daily press and the melodramatic improbabilities of the screen, their memories not undermined by second-hand book learning, these humble Hunza folk are immensely better educated than the products of our costly schools; not one of them but can tell you all the details of his own lineage for eight or nine generations back on either side. Outside Debrettites, how many of us British folk can do as much?

793 974 [212] A youngster who has a taste that way or who covets the position of a priest in the future, can easily learn to read and write a little Persian and Urdu at the feet of one of the local khalifas. Burushàski has no script and is never written; nor would it carry anywhere outside the Hunza and Yasin valleys if it were. If he is more ambitious of letters, he can foot the four

2: Lorimer T-3 (1920-4; 1934-5) 1939 AV7 Burusho AV7

miles daily to Báltit, as Yaman and a couple of our other young friends did, and attend the Government-supported school with the sons and grandsons of the Mir and the Wazir. Promising children of the more well-to-do can attend a more advanced school at Gilgit, and the really studious may even make their way down to Srinagar.

Ninety-nine per cent of the population, however, happily still remain illiterate, and have not fallen victims to compulsory education. When the people would question me about conditions in England, they were horrified to learn of such things as rates and income-tax, but even more aghast at the tyranny that compels both boys and girls to spend the years from five to fourteen at school. "But that's the time when they ought to be *learning things*," they said.

When my pleasant evening "By the Lamp" was ended and I had said good-bye, cautiously descended the ladder and mounted my waiting horse, I was shocked to see my host accompanying us carrying a tray of food. I had expressly stipulated that I would only accept his kind invitation on condition of not being laden with food gifts to take home. To my protests Kalbi said: "Yes, yes, Mother dear, it's all right. I'm not forgetting. I'm only taking up his supper to the sweeper."

With honourable simplicity the Hunzukuts abide by the fundamentals of Islam as they understand them. They may not be strong on ostentatious prayer and fasting, they rack their brains over no theological subtleties, but a Believer is a man and a brother, be he a Kashmiri, be he twenty times a sweeper. Here was a man of substance, a Levy, a grandfather, a much respected citizen in his small community, climbing a mile uphill to carry with his own hands a share of the evening's feast to his absentee guest. That the man was absent was no doubt a tactful concession to any caste-prejudice with which India might have infected me.

The boys lighten the monotony of the indoor weeks of the Great Cold by occasionally dashing out for a hasty game of foot polo or tipcat with their friends or keeping themselves warm with *mindak* matches. Such young men as are real dance

2: Lorimer T-3 (1929–4; 1934–5) 1939 AVT Barnabo AVT

312
857

1. Children watching water-hole (centre) to close it with the mushroom-plug (right) at given signal from father. (See p. 94)

PLATE XXIII

142
212

2. Two small Hunza princesses with pet puppy. (See p. 108)

3. Khalifa Farighat teaching his son to read the Persian scriptures. (See p. 241)

[Facing A. 304]

3x Lorimer L-3 (1929-4; 1934-5) 1935 AV7 Burusho AV7

THE LANGUAGE.

●212 Having described in some measure the country where Burushaski is spoken and the people who speak it, I must now give some account of the language itself and of the influences to which it has, at least in recent times, been subjected.

533 Burushaski[1] has no literature and is in fact an unwritten language. Obliging friends may have occasionally written Burushaski letters or texts in the Arabic script to humour enquiring foreigners such as Leitner or myself, but no convention has ever been arrived at to represent the sounds which are unknown to Arabic, Persian or Hindustani. When literate Burusho, and there are not many of them, have occasion to write, they do so in Persian for choice, or 217 in Hindustani. The student of Burushaski has thus no manuscripts, ancient or modern, to turn to for enlightenment. He must go direct to the linguistic fountain-head — the *sujet parlant*. As far as contemporaneous speech is concerned, this is rather a blessing than a loss, but a series of manuscripts or inscriptions going back through some hundreds of years would throw an invaluable light on the development of the language. Lacking them, we cannot divine its history, nor make any guess as to its primitive forms. Only the co-existence of Werchikwar enables us sometimes to deduce that a word or form which occurs in the one as an isolated or rare phenomenon is a survival of what was once perhaps common property, or else normal in some dialect.

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[1] I have never succeeded in getting anyone to recognise the word "Boorishki", the term applied to the language by Biddulph, and apparently accepted by Leitner, v. H. and H. Hdbk. p. 186 l. 2. Leitner also talks of the "Boorishki race". One cannot imagine that Biddulph and Leitner invented the term, so it would appear that it has gone out of use since their day. Possibly it may still flourish somewhere in Hagin. Leitner uses the term "Khajuna". This name is applied to Burushaski by [illegible] and non-Burusho, as Leitner himself seems to admit (loc. cit.). I have heard the word used in Chalt, in opposition to Shina, by a man who was probably himself normally a Shina-speaker.

7:Tobe C,T-3 (1959)1960 AV7 Burusho AV7
Hunza

CHAPTER 42

Government

I DON'T KNOW whether to describe the mode of government of Hunza as being complex or simple. The language of the people of Hunza is Burushaski and this language is totally unwritten. Therefore, they have no written code of laws.

The first dictionary of the Burushaski language was written by Colonel David Lorimer in 1935 and at the present time Doctor Hermann Berger, a German language professor, a specialist in Sanskrit, is seeking to write another and perhaps a more thorough and complete dictionary of that language.

I recall in Chalt, while I was enjoying the company of Professor Berger, he showed me a set of books that was published in Norway in 1935. They were Colonel David Lorimer's dictionary of the Burushaski language.

In my estimation Dr. Berger's work should be a masterpiece, because never in my life have I seen any

8:Clark N-5 (1948-1951) 1963
AV7 Burusho AV7
Hunza
[P 42-B]

125 One evening, I took a census of the
165 nine teen-age boys in my wood-carv-
[123] ing school. Of these, all from well-to-
do households, how many had seen
death in their immediate families?
165 Here was the roll:
681 Gohor Hayat: mother, three broth-
ers, two sisters; Sherin Beg: one
brother, one sister; Nur-ud-Din:
mother, two brothers, two sisters; Md.
Hamid: mother, one sister; Burhan
Shah: one brother, one sister; Nasar
Md.: mother, two brothers, one sister;
Mullah Madut: two brothers; Sulei-
man: one brother; Ghulam Rasul:
father. In a country fabled for the long
lives of its inhabitants, these are de-
pressingly typical Asian statistics.
165 Moreover, there is little reason to be-
576 lieve that any of the old men are really
as old as is claimed.

"How old are you?" I once asked a venerable patient.

"Ninety, Hazoor!" he answered.

"How do you know you're ninety?"

"Well, Hazoor, my hair is white, and I know I'm very old, and ninety is very old, so I must be ninety."

[124] My teen-aged assistant, Gohor Hayat, broke in impatiently, "Why do you
[217] waste time asking such questions?
[212] You know there are no records, because so few of my people can write!"

I had thought the old man might have a way of keeping count. "How old are you, Gohor Hayat?" I asked.

Gohor Hayat responded loftily, "I'm

[text continues on p. 43-C]

Dard AV3
Durusho AV7

(8) The pan belongs to Khana, the Raja of Yasin, etc.

(9) The pan belongs to righteous Girkis (the ruler of Hunza).

(10) The pan belongs to Maryo the son of Machat (a celebrated person of the Rono family).

(11) The pan is placed on Neelo But etc. At the same time the women who are in an inner room recite the following song :—

D 585 539

B 585 539

Translation.

(1) A large coral grain belongs to Bair Gul.

I will never let another string this on a thread.

I will string it myself.

(2) A large coral grain belongs to Malik, the Chief of Gilgit.

I will never let another string this.

I will string it myself.

After the marriage ceremony the following song is sung at the house of the bride :—

Translation.

(1) Come out, O beloved of your mother, why are you delaying?

(2) Come out, O water sprite, why are you delaying?

(3) Come, O possessors of golden locks, why are you delaying?

(4) Come out, O mistress of charming eyes, why are you delaying?

(5) Come out, O owner of pearly teeth, why are you delaying?

On this she is brought out. She weeps bitterly at the separation from her relatives, and the assembly sings the following song :—

Translation.

(1) Do not weep, O flower-like girl, thy complexion will turn pale.

(2) Thou wilt go on a lofty hill, O girl, thy complexion will turn pale.

(3) Thou wilt (by weeping) burn your heat, thy complexion will turn pale.

Typical birth song ... Nil

Typical death song ... Nil

B 212 ●

D 212.

11. No written language possessed by the people.